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ON

THE COUNTRY CHURCH

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The church and country life. Pamphlet issued
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The Country Church Program

By WARREN H. WILSON, Ph.D.

We cannot understand the country church without practicing what we know. The best means of comprehension of the duty of the Church to the country community and to country people is a program of action for the sake of insight. The ministers who are co-operating with the Presbyterian Department of Church and Country Life have worked out together such a program.

The country church is struggling for survival. In a few instances country churches are successful. In most cases the country church is gradually, and in some cases swiftly, losing ground. The following program is presented as a statement of principles and methods essential to the survival and continued efficiency of the country church.

First—The country church must be evangelistic. Its existence depends upon its interest in temperance and

other moral reforms, and it must be, in order to survive in our day, a missionary church. In all this the country church shares the experience of the Church at large.

Second—The country church serves men by serving the country community. It must be a community center, sympathetic with all the interests of the entire community.

Third—The churches in each country community must federate with one another in the interest of the Kingdom. Rural Christianity and civilization are dependent upon union. The country church is simple, and the Christian message must be single and free from division or differences.

Fourth—The country church should make a thorough survey of the community as a basis of its work. It should preserve this survey as a permanent Exhibit, using it as the basis of its continued service to the community.

Fifth—The country church is dependent for its survival and its continued efficiency upon its promoting and inspiring some or all of the following movements according as the community has need.

(a) The improvement of schools

and their consolidation wherever possible.

(b) The study of scientific agriculture and of better farming in all forms.

(c) Public recreation for the young people and working people of the community.

(d) Public health and better living conditions.

(e) Co-operation with the Grange and other community organizations in plans for progress.

(i) An Old Home Anniversary to cherish the history of the town and to maintain active communication with former residents and members.

Sixth—In order to survive and to maintain religious efficiency the country church must determine its policies within the community by the needs of the marginal man. In the country, tenant farmers, farm hands, immigrants, the young people and the children in the community are the marginal people by whom the standards of character and conduct are measured. In its service to them the country church succeeds or fails with the community as a whole.

Seventh—It is essential to the con-

tinuance of the country church that the pastor receive a salary sufficient for his living under the prevailing economic conditions.

This program is the voice of the successful country minister, who speaks out of a hard struggle. He speaks for many men who are losing in the struggle. Out of the country church men are going in desperation, being beaten in the fight by certain evil conditions which prevail to-day in the country and are the greatest enemies of the church. Some of the above principles are not universal, but certain of them were universally agreed upon as vital to the survival of the country church throughout the United States. By general consent four of these stand out above all the others—the worst enemies of the country church are denominationalism, bad economic methods in agriculture, the inefficient country school, and the impossible salary which is offered to all country ministers. The program, therefore, commends federation of churches, the study of agriculture, consolidation of schools and readjustment of ministers' salaries as essential to the survival of the country church and to its continued efficiency.

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